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Celebration of the Rededication of Congress Hall

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ADDRESSES

OF

HON. WOODROW WILSON

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

AND

HON. CHAMP CLARK

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AT PHILADELPHIA, PA.

OCTOBER 25, 1913



PRESENTED BY MR. HARDWICK

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ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT WILSON.

[Delivered at Philadelphia, Pa., on the occasion of the rededication of Congress Hall, Oct. 25, 1913.]

Your Honor, Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

No American could stand in this place to-day and think of the circumstances which we are come together to celebrate without being most profoundly stirred. There has come over me since I sat down here a sense of deep solemnity, because it has seemed to me that I saw ghosts crowding—a great assemblage of spirits, no longer visible, but whose influence we still feel as we feel the molding power of history itself. The men who sat in this hall, to whom we now look back with a touch of deep sentiment, were men of flesh and blood, face to face with extremely difficult problems. The population of the United States then was hardly three times the present population of the city of Philadelphia, and yet that was a Nation as this is a Nation, and the men who spoke for it were setting their hands to a work which was to last, not only that their people might be happy, but that an example might be lifted up for the instruction of the rest of the world.

I like to read the quaint old accounts such as Mr. Day has read to us this afternoon. Strangers came then to America to see what the young people that had sprung up here were like, and they found men in counsel who knew how to construct governments. They found men deliberating here who had none of the appearance of novices, none of the hesitation of men who did not know whether the work they were doing was going to last or not; men who addressed themselves to a problem of construction as familiarly as we attempt to carry out the traditions of a Government established these 137 years.

I feel to-day the compulsion of these men, the compulsion of examples which were set up in this place. And of what do their examples remind us? They remind us not merely of public service but of public service shot through with principle and honor. They were not histrionic men. They did not say—

Look upon us as upon those who shall hereafter be illustrious.

They said:

Look upon us who are doing the first free work of constitutional liberty in the world, and who must do it in soberness and truth, or it will not last.

Politics, ladies and gentlemen, is made up in just about equal parts of comprehension and sympathy. No man ought to go into politics who does not comprehend the task that he is going to attack. He

may comprehend it so completely that it daunts him, that he doubts whether his own spirit is stout enough and his own mind able enough to attempt its great undertakings, but unless he comprehend it he ought not to enter it. After he has comprehended it, there should come into his mind those profound impulses of sympathy which connect him with the rest of mankind, for politics is a business of interpretation, and no men are fit for it who do not see and seek more than their own advantage and interest.

We have stumbled upon many unhappy circumstances in the hundred years that have gone by since the event that we are celebrating. Almost all of them have come from self-centered men, men who saw in their own interest the interest of the country, and who did not have vision enough to read it in wider terms, in the universal terms of equity and justice and the rights of mankind. I hear a great many people at Fourth of July celebrations laud the Declaration of Independence who in between Julys shiver at the plain language of our bills of rights. The Declaration of Independence was, indeed, the first audible breath of liberty, but the substance of liberty is written in such documents as the declaration of rights attached, for example, to the first constitution of Virginia which was a model for the similar documents read elsewhere into our great fundamental charters. That document speaks in very plain terms. The men of that generation did not hesitate to say that every people has a right to choose its own forms of government—not once, but as often as it pleases—and to accommodate those forms of government to its existing interests and circumstances. Not only to establish but to alter is the fundamental principle of self-government.

We are just as much under compulsion to study the particular circumstances of our own day as the gentlemen were who sat in this hall and set us precedents, not of what to do but of how to do it. Liberty inheres in the circumstances of the day. Human happiness consists in the life which human being are leading at the time that they live. I can feed my memory as happily upon the circumstances of the revolutionary and constitutional period as you can, but I can not feed all my purposes with them in Washington now. Every day problems arise which wear some new phase and aspect, and I must fall back, if I would serve my conscience, upon those things which are fundamental rather than upon those things which are superficial, and ask myself this question, How are you going to assist in some small part to give the American people and, by example, the peoples of the world more liberty, more happiness, more substantial prosperity: and how are you going to make that prosperity a common heritage instead of a selfish possession? I came here to-day partly in order to feed my own spirit. I did not come in compliment. When I was asked to come I knew immediately upon the utterance of the invitation that I had to come, that to be absent would be as if I refused to drink once more at the original fountains of inspiration for our own Government.

The men of the day which we now celebrate had a very great advantage over us, ladies and gentlemen, in this one particular: Life was simple in America then. All men shared the same circumstances in almost equal degree. We think of Washington, for example, as an aristocrat, as a man separated by training, separated by family

and neighborhood tradition, from the ordinary people of the rank and file of the country. Have you forgotten the personal history of George Washington? Do you not know that he struggled as poor boys now struggle for a meager and imperfect education; that he worked at his surveyor's tasks in the lonely forests; that he knew all the roughness, all the hardships, all the adventure, all the variety of the common life of that day; and that if he stood a little stillly in this place, if he looked a little aloof, it was because life had dealt hardly with him? All his sinews had been stiffened by the rough work of making America. He was a man of the people, whose touch had been with them since the day he saw the light first in the old Dominion of Virginia. And the men who came after him, men, some of whom had drunk deep at the sources of philosophy and of study, were, nevertheless, also men who on this side of the water knew no complicated life but the simple life of primitive neighborhoods. Our task is very much more difficult. That sympathy which alone interprets public duty is more difficult for a public man to acquire now than it was then, because we live in the midst of circumstances and conditions infinitely complex.

No man can boast that he understands America. No man can boast that he has lived the life of America, as almost every man who sat in this hall in those days could boast. No man can pretend that except by common counsel he can gather into his consciousness what the varied life of this people is. The duty that we have to keep open eyes and open hearts and accessible understandings is a very much more difficult duty to perform than it was in their day. Yet how much more important that it should be performed, for fear we make infinite and irreparable blunders. The city of Washington is in some respects self-contained, and it is easy there to forget what the rest of the United States is thinking about. I count it a fortunate circumstance that almost all the windows of the White House and its offices open upon unoccupied spaces that stretch to the banks of the Potomac and then out into Virginia and on to the heavens themselves, and that as I sit there I can constantly forget Washington and remember the United States. Not that I would intimate that all of the United States lies south of Washington, but there is a serious thing back of my thought. If you think too much about being reelected, it is very difficult to be worth reelecting. You are so apt to forget that the comparatively small number of persons, numerous as they seem to be when they swarm, who come to Washington to ask for things, do not constitute an important proportion of the population of the country, that it is constantly necessary to come away from Washington and renew one's contact with the people who do not swarm there, who do not ask for anything, but who do trust you without their personal counsel to do your duty. Unless a man gets these contacts he grows weaker and weaker. He needs them as Hercules needed the touch of mother earth. If you lift him up too high or he lifts himself too high, he loses the contact and therefore loses the inspiration.

I love to think of those plain men, however far from plain their dress sometimes was, who assembled in this hall. One is startled to think of the variety of costume and color which would now occur if we were let loose upon the fashions of that age. Men's lack of taste

is largely concealed now by the limitations of fashion. Yet these men, who sometimes dressed like the peacock, were, nevertheless, of the ordinary flight of their time. They were birds of a feather; they were birds come from a very simple breeding; they were much in the open heaven. They were beginning, when there was so little to distract their attention, to show that they could live upon fundamental principles of government. We talk those principles, but we have not time to absorb them. We have not time to let them into our blood, and thence have them translated into the plain mandates of action.

The very smallness of this room, the very simplicity of it all, all the suggestions which come from its restoration, are reassuring things—things which it becomes a man to realize. Therefore my theme here to-day, my only thought, is a very simple one. Do not let us go back to the annals of those sessions of Congress to find out what to do, because we live in another age and the circumstances are absolutely different; but let us be men of that kind; let us feel at every turn the compulsions of principle and of honor which thy felt; let us free our vision from temporary circumstances and look abroad at the horizon and take into our lungs the great air of freedom which has blown through this country and stolen across the seas and blessed people everywhere; and, looking east and west and north and south, let us remind ourselves that we are the custodians, in some degree, of the principles which have made men free and governments just.

ADDRESS OF HON. CHAMP CLARK.

[Delivered at Philadelphia, Pa., Saturday, Oct. 25, 1913.]

In the history of America there are certain great epochal events which we can all most heartily and enthusiastically celebrate. Among these are the discovery of the New World; the first white settlement at Jamestown; the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock; Patrick Henry's great lyric speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses, which precipitated the Revolution and which still stirs the heart like strains of martial music; the skirmish at Lexington, where the embattled farmers fired the shot heard around the world; the Declaration of Independence; the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown; the adoption of the Constitution; and the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, which made us a world power.

Philadelphia was the scene of two of these vastly important and far-reaching transactions—the promulgation of the Declaration and the making of the Constitution. The former published our theory of government; the latter set forth the plan to put that theory into effect. The Declaration is the most splendid State paper in all the hoary registers of time; the Constitution has been pronounced the greatest single emanation of the human mind. The majestic sweep of the Declaration helped us secure our liberty. A man of sensibility can not read it, even at this late day, without his blood flowing faster. For 137 years it has been a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to people everywhere struggling for the freedom to which all men are entitled.

If there were saints in the political calendar as there are in the religious and if particular days were assigned to particular saints, the Fourth of July would be universally called Saint Jefferson's Day. The twin basic ideas, "All men are created equal" and "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," which the fathers enunciated that day in this goodly city have worked like the leaven described in the Bible until the civilized world has accepted our political philosophy in whole or in part. Like Tennyson's brook, they will go on forever until men everywhere are free. Our Declaration of Independence is the Magna Charta of human liberty and has revolutionized the world.

If it be true that imitation is the sincerest flattery, we have ample cause for self-congratulation, for our Constitution has become both the fashion and the pattern among nations. The highest compliment ever paid the fathers of the Republic was when Bismarck built the new German Empire upon the model of our dual government.

Be it ours to preserve, strengthen, and perpetuate our free institutions, thereby transmitting to our descendants the richest heritage ever possessed by the children of men.

Ladies and gentlemen, the words I have just spoken constitute the written speech which I gave out in advance to the newspapers because they wanted it. Now I am going to say a few things pertinent to the occasion for my own satisfaction.

From the smallest beginning we have risen to a commanding position.

Truly does Emerson say:

We live in a new and exceptional age. America is another word for opportunity. Our entire history appears like a last effort of Divine Providence in behalf of the human race.

Those words of the great Concord philosopher were fitly spoken and are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Our growth in every respect has been, indeed, phenomenal.

In 1800 we had 5,308,483 people. In 1910 our population was 91,972,266 in continental America alone, exclusive of Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Porto Rico, the Philippines, and the Canal Zone. If our population increases at that rate for the next 110 years, in 2010 it will number 2,000,000,000 souls—500,000,000 more than are supposed to be on earth to-day. It makes one think of Andrew Carnegie's gorgeous vision of "the United States of the World." Not long since Mr. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson declared in a public address that if the Mississippi Valley were cultivated for all it is worth on the average one acre would support one human being, which would give us 1,250,000,000 citizens betwixt the top of the Alleghenies and the crest of the Rockies.

When Mr. Speaker Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg called the House of the First Congress to order he presided over a House composed of 56 Members. Now I preside over a House composed of 435 Members, to say nothing of two Territorial Delegates and three Resident Commissioners from Porto Rico and the Philippines. In the beginning the ratio for a Representative in Congress was 33,000; now it is 212,500. With the first ratio and our present population the House of Representatives would consist of 2,787 Representatives.

In 113 years our total wealth multiplied 125 fold and is now rated by statisticians at the enormous sum of \$140,000,000,000, which, if equally distributed, would give \$1,312 to every man, woman, and child between the two oceans. But there's the rub, for while a few are rich beyond the dream of avarice, many have not the wherewithal to feed and clothe themselves. I am fain to believe that the crowning glory of the philosophy, statecraft, humanitarianism, and religion of the twentieth century will be to devise a scheme whereby every man, and every woman, too, shall enjoy the usufruct of his own labor and to prevent one greedy soul from monopolizing the toil and sweat and lives of thousands. The signs of the times indicate that that dream is not too fantastic for entertainment. That glad era began when N. O. Nelson, of St. Louis, originated the plan of sharing profits with his employees. I humbly and reverently thank God this day that he is a Missourian. Some of the great manufacturing concerns, railroads, and insurance companies are establishing pension systems for their employees disabled by sickness, accident, or old age, which put to blush the liberal pension system of the Federal Government for

the soldiers of our various wars. I say blessed be the name of the man forever, without regard to politics or religion, who establishes abiding peace between labor and capital, which should be friends and not enemies.

Should our wealth increase for the next 113 years at the rate of the last 113, in the year 2026 it will amount to \$17,500,000,000,000, a sum so stupendous as to be incomprehensible by the mathematical powers of the human mind.

In 1800 our territory was circumscribed by the Atlantic on the east, the Mississippi on the west, the Great Lakes on the north, and the Floridas on the south. It did not even touch the Gulf of Mexico. Now it extends from the sunrise side of Porto Rico in the east to the Lord only knows where in the west.

In 1800 we were a fourth-rate power, a feeble folk of little value in the world's calculations and plans. Now we are in the front rank, and there is not an emperor, czar, king, prince, potentate, or premier who does not lie awake of nights trying to discover what we will do next. The President of the United States has more real power than any ruler on earth, the reason being that so soon as any man is elected President he is the President of all Americans of whatever persuasion, religious or political.

In 1800 churches were like angels' visits, few and far between. The advent of the preacher into a community was the event of the season, sometimes of the year. Now the average citizen lives within less than 4 miles of a place of worship and preachers and priests are as plentiful as candidates in a Republican primary in Philadelphia. These facts are not to be despised even by statesmen, for the wisest man that ever lived said: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

The majority of the men who fought in the Revolutionary War could not read and write. According to the last census less than 8 per cent of our white people were classed as illiterate.

When George Washington was first sworn in as President there were about a dozen colleges in the United States, every one of them in imminent danger of dying of what the doctors call anemia—that is, poverty of the blood. Now a million ambitious boys and girls are preparing themselves for the important and onerous duties of American citizenship at 500 universities and colleges, not to mention high-class academies. I myself have lectured to one audience composed entirely of the teachers and students of one university which numbered more persons than did the army with which Sam Houston established the liberty of Texas on the red field of San Jacinto.

It is said to have been the wish dearest to the heart of Henry IV, the greatest of the Bourbon Kings, that France might become so prosperous that every Frenchman might have a fowl in the pot for his Sunday dinner, which does not seem much of a boon to us meat eaters in this rich and favored land. If I had one prayer for the American Republic which I knew would be answered, it would be that every American citizen should be sufficiently educated to read his ballot intelligently on election day and sufficiently courageous to cast it as becomes an American freeman.

The small but goodly company of heroes and statesmen who once sat in this Hall and legislated for the nascent Republic wrought

wisely and patriotically in the cause of human freedom. We also of this day who are intrusted with power—the President and his administration and both Houses of Congress—work energetically, patriotically, and wisely, I hope, for the public weal.

The greatest achievement to our credit is that we have taught all the peoples of the earth that men can govern themselves—a glorious fact of which we may well be proud.

I have no patience with the pessimists and muckrakers who are forever predicting the downfall of the Republic and the return of chaos. It surely must be that if 3,000,000 backwoodsmen in the dawn of civilization on this continent possessed the wisdom, skill, courage, fortitude, patriotism, and self-abnegation to achieve liberty, we ninety-odd millions of their descendants, the very flower of the human race, with a continent for our home and the resources of a continent to command, possess the wisdom, skill, courage, fortitude, patriotism, and self-abnegation to preserve our free institutions for ourselves and our posterity.

When I look into the faces of my children my heart swells with ineffable pride to think that they are citizens of this mighty Republic, one and indivisible, built not for a day but for all time, and destined under God to be the dominating influence through all the centuries yet to be.



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